

HOUSE BILL 79

By Gilmore

AN ACT to designate a segment of Clarksville Pike (U.S. Highway 41-A / State Route 112) in Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County in honor of the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges in honor of those exemplary public servants who have worked with purpose and commitment to improve our society; and

WHEREAS, no person is more deserving of this honor than the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who served and continues to serve as an inspiration to all people who embrace justice, equality, and peace; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., was born January 15, 1929; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King attended segregated public schools in Georgia, and began attending Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of 15; and

WHEREAS, in February of 1948, Dr. King was ordained in the Christian ministry at the age of 19 at Ebenezer Baptist Church, in Atlanta, Georgia, and became Assistant Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951 from Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in theology in 1955 from Boston University; and

WHEREAS, in Boston, Massachusetts, Dr. King met Coretta Scott, his life partner and fellow civil rights activist; and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 1953, Dr. King and Coretta Scott were married and later had two sons and two daughters; and

WHEREAS, in 1954, Dr. King accepted the call of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and was pastor there from September 1954 to November 1959, when he resigned to move back to Atlanta to lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King led the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott for 381 days to protest the arrest of Rosa Parks and the segregation of the bus system of Montgomery, during which time Dr. King was arrested and the home of Dr. King was bombed; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King responded to arrests and violence with non-violence and courage in the face of hatred; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery bus boycott was the first great nonviolent civil rights demonstration of contemporary times in the United States; and

WHEREAS, on December 21, 1956, the Supreme Court declared laws requiring segregation on buses unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, between 1957 and 1968, Dr. King traveled more than 6,000,000 miles, spoke more than 2,500 times, and wrote five books and numerous articles supporting efforts around the country to end injustice and bring about social change and desegregation; and

WHEREAS, from 1960 until his death in 1968, Dr. King was co-pastor with his father at Ebenezer Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, on August 28, 1963, Dr. King led the March on Washington, D.C., the largest rally of the civil rights movement, during which, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and before a crowd of more than 200,000 people, Dr. King delivered his famous "I Have A Dream" speech, one of the classic orations in American history; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was a champion of nonviolence, fervently advocated nonviolent resistance as the strategy to end segregation and racial discrimination in America, and in 1964, at age 35, became the youngest man to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition for his efforts; and

WHEREAS, through his work and reliance on nonviolent protest, Dr. King was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, the work of Dr. King created a basis of understanding and respect and helped communities, and the United States as a whole, to act cooperatively and courageously to restore tolerance, justice, and equality between people; and

WHEREAS, on the evening of April 4, 1968, Dr. King was assassinated while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead sanitation workers in protest against low wages and intolerable working conditions; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King dedicated his life to securing the fundamental principles of liberty and justice for all United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was the leading civil rights advocate of his time, spearheading the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1950's and 1960's and earning world-wide recognition as an eloquent and articulate spokesperson for equality; and

WHEREAS, in the face of hatred and violence, Dr. King preached a doctrine of nonviolence and civil disobedience to combat segregation, discrimination, and racial injustice, and believed that people have the moral capacity to care for other people; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King awakened the conscience and consciousness of the United States and used his message of hope to bring people together to build the "Beloved Community," a community of justice, at peace with itself; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King's actions and leadership made the United States a better place and the American people a better people; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly wishes to permanently commemorate the legacy of Dr. King, a legacy summarized so inspirationally by the great man himself when he said: "One

day this Nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.'"; and

WHEREAS, presently, no street or highway in Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County has been named in Dr. King's honor, and this oversight should be corrected; and

WHEREAS, in remembrance of Dr. King's still pertinent message, we rededicate ourselves to Dr. King's goal of a free and just United States by naming in his honor a segment of Clarksville Pike (U.S. Highway 41-A / State Route 112) in Nashville's most prominent and most historic African American community; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the segment of Clarksville Pike (U.S. Highway 41-A / State Route 112) in Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County from its intersection with Dr. D.B. Todd, Jr. Boulevard and 18th Avenue North northwestward to the Briley Parkway (State Route 155) Overpass is hereby designated as " Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard" to honor the memory and ongoing legacy of the founding father and greatest leader of the American Civil Rights Movement.

SECTION 2. The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County is directed to take all appropriate action to change the designation of the segment of highway described in Section 1 as the "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard" and to erect suitable signs or affix suitable markers designating such segment of highway as "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard" .

SECTION 3. The erection of such directional signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not

render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.